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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: JAZZ AMBASSADORS THRILL CROWDS IN SURINAME, HELP  
EMBASSY SEND THE MESSAGE THAT SURINAME MATTERS TO THE U.S.

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SUMMARY  
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1. On July 8-11, the Embassy hosted Jazz Ambassadors Deborah Davis and a Few Good Men in the first ever visit of a Jazz Ambassadors group to Suriname. The dynamic quartet thrilled school children in a workshop entitled "What is Jazz?," invitees to a private concert at the Ambassador's residence, patrons of a local nightclub with a guest appearance, and the wider public during a Saturday night concert. Judging from the tremendous outpouring of support, the Jazz Ambassadors visit was a tremendous success that left audiences craving for more Embassy-sponsored cultural programs. In turn, the Jazz Ambassadors welcomed the opportunity to experience Suriname's cultural diversity with a visit to a Maroon village. End Summary.

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FIRST-EVER VISIT OF JAZZ AMBASSADORS TO SURINAME  
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2. Jazz Ambassadors Deborah Davis and A Few Good Men paid a visit to Suriname on July 8-11, the first ever such visit of a Jazz Ambassadors group. Paramaribo was the first stop in a seven-country tour, which also includes stops in Guyana, Venezuela, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Surinamers eagerly awaited their visit as interest in jazz is growing; last year, the country held its first jazz festival. In addition, Surinamers have long urged the Embassy to carry out more cultural programming and have repeatedly expressed their regret over the closing of USIS in the mid 1990s.

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REACHING OUT TO THE SUCCESSOR GENERATION  
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3. On July 9, the first day of their two-day program, the Jazz Ambassadors conducted a workshop entitled "What is Jazz?" for fifty music students and teachers from two junior high schools, Calor and Asin, with which the Embassy has an active outreach program. The group provided an informal overview of the history and elements of jazz and explained the importance of improvisation. The Jazz Ambassadors also impressed the students with several songs, which led one student who believed that jazz is meant for mature audiences to declare, "I never knew jazz sounded like that." To the Embassy's delight, one radio announcer present at the workshop expressed his amazement at the group's high caliber over the air.

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WOWING THE CROWDS  
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4. Later that evening the Jazz Ambassadors performed a concert for 80 of Suriname's most prominent government officials, politicians, entrepreneurs, and other notables, including First Lady Liesbeth Venetiaan. At the Ambassador's residence, their presentation elicited nodding heads, tapping feet, a standing ovation, and rounds of applause from those assembled. Many invitees later expressed their gratitude to the Embassy for the rare treat. A prominent surgeon who is a jazz aficionado stressed that it was important for Surinamers to hear what music of the highest caliber sounds like so that they can aspire to perform at that level. Others echoed his sentiments at Rumors, Suriname's premier jazz club, during the Jazz Ambassadors' guest appearance there.

5. The following night the Jazz Ambassadors performed for a maximum crowd of 550 at the Torarica hotel. According to the group, the crowd's positive reactions exceeded their expectations. They noted that, when Davis indicated that the show was over, the crowd chanted "no" several times and remained standing in place until Davis and the group returned to the stage. Given this tremendous outpouring of support, Davis and the group performed an additional three

songs and shared with the crowd their appreciation for the crowd's support, which they said made the visit to Suriname, their first stop, memorable.

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#### VISIT TO A MAROON VILLAGE

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16. Before their departure, the Jazz Ambassadors visited Santigron, a Maroon village located one hour away from the capital. (Note: Maroons are descendants of slaves who fled into the jungle to escape slavery. End Note.) The group toured the village, listened to an impromptu drum presentation, and saw a traditional dance performed by children. The group met with a singer and a village captain and his wife who asked Davis to sing for them. For her efforts, Davis received approval and a bear hug from the captain's wife. The group welcomed this unique experience, which one member described as a visit within a visit -- an unexpected stop in Africa here in Suriname -- and expressed general wonder at Suriname's culturally diverse population.

#### COMMENT

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17. The Jazz Ambassadors' visit to Suriname was an unqualified success. At a time when the U.S. is pressing the GOS to take a number of actions which do not have public support, e.g. Article 98, road realignment, this display of "soft power" was a welcome indication that the U.S. cares about Suriname. Suriname remains a somewhat difficult public diplomacy environment given Surinamers' tendency to oppose U.S. foreign policy and to question U.S. motives. Suriname is of particular interest to us given its sizeable Muslim population, its membership in the Organization of American States, and its potential energy reserves, Embassy would like to make a Jazz Ambassadors visit an annual event. It is a good investment. Embassy highly recommends Deborah Davis and a Few Good Men for future State Department-sponsored appearances given their musical talents and their ability to mix well with locals. Embassy also thanks Sandra Rouse, Audrey Pruitt, and WHA/PD for making the initiative possible. End Comment.

BARNES

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